

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, TH

SUBJ: VIEWS OF KING AND PRAMOT BROTHERS

REF: A. BANGKOK A-130, B. BANGKOK 19373

SUMMARY: ON JULY 15 DCM PAID FAREWELL CALLS ON KING AND PRAMOT BROTHERS, DURING WHICH THEY EXPRESSED DESIRE TO CONTINUE CLOSE U.S. -THAI RELATIONS AND DISCUSSED POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH FORCED THAILAND TO DEMAND THE TOTAL CESSATION OF U.S. ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND, NEED TO ADJUST TO REALITY THAT HANOI IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN SEA, AND THE GROWING CONCERN ABOUT INSURGENCY AND INCREASED LAWLESSNESS IN THAILAND. CONVERSATIONS WERE FURTHER INDICATION OF RECENT ATTEMPTS TO EXPRESS GOODWILL TOWARD US AS REFLECTED IN ATTENDANCE AT BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION RECEPTION AND DELUGE OF CONGRATULATORY LETTERS AND FLOWERS RECEIVED FOR JULY 4. END SUMMARY

1. DURING HIS LAST TWO WEEKS IN THAILAND, THE DCM PAID FAREWELL CALLS ON THE KING AND THE PRESENT AND THE SECRET

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FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND, M.R. SENI PRAMOT

AND M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT. COPIES OF THE MEMCONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT; FOLLOWING ARE COMMON THEMES AND CONCERNS EXPRESSED DURING CONVERSATIONS.

2. U.S. -THAI RELATIONS. ALL WERE ESPECIALLY ANXIOUS TO ASSURE THE US THAT THAILAND VERY MUCH WISHED CONTINUED CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. BOTH THE KING AND THE PRIME MINISTER HOPED THAT THE US RECOGNIZED THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF A SMALL GROUP DO NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE THAI PEOPLE WHILE M.R. KHUKRIT EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS IN NON-MILITARY FIELDS.

3. ALL THREE REGRETTED THE OUTCOME OF THE RECENT US-THAI NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING RESIDUAL U.S. ACTIVITIES. THE KING FELT THAT THAILAND WAS CUTTING ITSELF OFF FROM ITS FRIENDS, PARTICULARLY THE US, TO TOO GREAT AN EXTENT. THE PRAMOTS BOTH STATED THEY HAD HOPED FOR THE RETENTION OF RAMASUN AND CERTAIN OTHER ACTIVITIES BUT FOUND THAT IT WAS POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. AS KHUKRIT, SAID, THE FACILITES BECAME A SERIOUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE AS WELL AS "LIGHTNING RODS" FOR THE NEW COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN INDOCHINA WHICH HURT THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH THEM.

4. THAI-VIETNAM RELATIONS. THE KING HAD NO OBJECTION TO AND THE PRAMOT BROTHERS FAVORED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. THE KING, HOWEVER, FELT STRONGLY THAT THE THAI NEEDED TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST VIETNAM'S DESIRE TO EXERCISE "HEGEMONY" OVER SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE PRAMOT BROTHERS BOTH SAID THEY REALIZED THAT HANOI WAS SUPPORTING INSURGENT ACTIVITIES BUT THAT THE THAIS NEEDED TO TALK TO HANOI TO SEE IF CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WERE POSSIBLE. KHULRIT SAID PHILOSOPHICALLY THAT DESPITE PERSONAL PREFERENCES, ALL MUST ADJUST TO THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA WHERE HANOI IS A MAJOR FACTOR. MMR. SENI WAS CONVINCED THAT HANOI WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THAI INSURGENCY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CALLING FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT HIS

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GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE DANGERS AND WAS ENTERING THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH EYES OPEN.

5. INSURGENCY. THE KING AND THE PRIME MINISTER WERE EVIDENTLY WORRIED ABOUT THE INCREASED LEVEL OF INSURGENT ACTIVITIES AND OF OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNISTS. THE KING ALSO WORRIED THAT THE THAI MILITARY WAS NOT UP TO HANDLING THE INSURGENCY PROBLEM. PRIME MINISTER

M.R. SENI HOPED THAT US MILITARY AID WOULD CONCENTRATE PARTICULARLY ON ITEMS WHICH WOULD BE USEFUL IN THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY FIELD. RECENT EVENTS HE SAID HAD SHOWN THAT THAILAND HAD DEFICIENCIES IN ITS ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE INSURGENCY, AND THAILAND NEEDED U.S. HELP.

6. DOMESTIC POLITICS. THE KING EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE WIDENING SPLIT BETWEEN THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT IN THAILAND WITH POSITIONS BECOMING MORE RIGID AND THAIS LESS TOLERANT. M.R. KHUKRIT SAID THAT THE THAIS WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DISENCHANTED WITH THE PARLIAMENT. LAWLESSNESS WAS GROWING. THIS INCREASED LAWLESSNESS COULD CREATE A SITUATION UNDER WHICH THE MILITARY COULD RETURN TO POWER. BUT KHUKRIT ALSO SAID THAT THAILAND MAY BE SAVED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO CHARISMATIC LEADER WITHIN THE MILITARY.

7. COMMENT: DURING HIS LAST TWO WEEKS IN THAILAND, THE DCM WAS INUNDATED WITH INVITATIONS FOR PARTIES IN HIS HONOR FROM SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS AS WELL AS HIS MANY OTHER FRIENDS. THAI FRIENDLINESS AND THE EXTRA OUTPOURING OF GOODWILL WERE NOT ONLY A PERSONAL COMPLIMENT TO THE DCM BUT ALSO REFLECTED THE APPARENT DESIRE OF THE THAIS TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE THAT THEY SEEK CONTINUED CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. THIS MESSAGE WAS ECHOED BY THAIS WITH WHOM EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS AND AND WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE REASON FOR THE HIGH LEVEL ATTENDANCE AT THE EMBASSY JULY 4TH RECEPTION AND THE DOZENS OF FLORAL BOUQUETS AND HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALLY PREPARED LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE EMBASSY EXPRESSING CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BICENTEN-

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NIAL OF U.S. INDEPENDENCE.

8. IT IS ALSO CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT AS CONCERNS RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA, THE SENI GOVERNMENT WILL FOLLOW THE BASIC FOREIGN POLICY LINES LAID DOWN BY THE PREDECESSOR KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT (REPORTED IN REPAIR) AND EXPLAINED BY PHICHAIRATTAKUN TO THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND ON JULY 2. (REF B). THE THAIS ARE PRESSING FORWARD TO ESTABLISH BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE INDOCHINESE STATES WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THESE COUNTRIES WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT INSURGENT ACTIVITIES WITHIN THAILAND. THIS KNOWLEDGE AND THE APPARENT UPSURGE IN INSURGENT ACTIVITIES HAS HEIGHTENED THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN ABOUT INSURGENCY. THE EMBASSY IS UNDERTAKING A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHETHER

THERE IS AN ACTUAL UPSURGE IN THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY
OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITY OR A DISTORTION CAUSED BY GREATER
PUBLIC FOCUS ON COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES.
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